

USAID/Nepal's support for conflict-affected youth in Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, and Kanchanpur districts has reached over 32,000 youth through the Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation project. Working at the grass-roots level, this project empowered youth to play a more constructive role in their communities.

Working at the grass-roots level, this project empowered youth to play a more constructive role in their communities. The project enabled creation of village youth committees; engaged youth in small-scale community service projects including planting trees, improving roads, and assisting in dispute resolution; provided training in conflict management, leadership, and social mobilization; and facilitated events that created opportunities for interaction and collaboration between youth from different geographic areas and ethnicities. The project also received support from the NIKE Foundation in the form of sports materials.

Beth S. Paige, Mission Director of USAID/Nepal remarked, "Youth clubs in Nepal are part of an effort USAID began in 2006 to engage young people between ages 16 and 30 in activities that promote peace and reconciliation. The groups organize activities that offer creative alternatives to conflict, develop new skills, and promote self-confidence, which is considered a priority after 12 years of conflict in Nepal that disproportionately affected the country's youth."

"In several of the community service projects, youth's contributions far outweighed the contribution of the project itself, which is a testament to the ability of youth clubs to leverage participation and resources from community members. USAID has immense faith in the youth of Nepal," she added.

Krishna Kusumyah, a project participant from the Dang District, shared, "We have two communities in our village – Tharus and Brahmin/ Chettris. These two communities always quarreled in the past. When we formed a youth club and invited members of the other ethnic group to come, no one came at first; but we continued to invite them and one or two youth started to come. Then, we planned to gravel and maintain the road as part of a community service project. This project really brought youth from the two communities together. Now we speak and say hello when we meet on the road. Visits between youth in each other's communities are increasing, and we are becoming friends.

The two-year \$600,000 project was funded by USAID and implemented by Mercy Corps and

Backward Society Education (BASE) beginning September 2006 and ended recently.